

SOME DATES IN CONNECTION WITH  
CEMETERIES IN AND NEAR ROCKTON.

1. Some information can here be offered about two cemeteries of the Rockton area, for which I am indebted to Mrs. Eva Baumel, Rockton Correspondent for The Beloit Daily News.
2. Winnebago County was organized at a meeting July 15, 1836.
3. The First Congregational Church of Pekatonika, (later called Rockton), was organized March 23, 1838, at the home of William Talcott, who was the Founder of Rockton.
4. As was the case in Wisconsin history, the movements of pioneer settlers coming from the east to take up land, were often in advance of this legal, organized settlement. As soon as the close of the Black Hawk War made it safer, settlers were at hand. (1832).

Stephen Mack, whose tombstone records that he was in the Rock River Valley country by 1822, (the other one whom we know being Joseph Thibault on his Beloit site), took up the land of his farm at Macktown in 1835. In 1839, he built the house on it which is still standing and about to be restored.

5. Mack's Indian wife, Hononegah, died in July, 1847. She was buried in a cemetery on Mack's farm at the time. Mack himself died in April 1850 and was buried beside her. But, with the passing of time, the land was needed for farming. According to the Mack stones, still readable, their remains were moved by friends to the Phillips Cemetery, near Harrison, in 1880.
6. A boulder now marks the spot at Macktown where they were first buried.
7. Mrs. Baumel relates that Jesse Kocher, a trustee on the Rockton Cemetery Board, says the Rockton Cemetery was purchased from Wait Talcott in 1857, at a cost of \$800, the conveyance cost being \$45.95. This is the resting-place of Brigadier-general Elon Farnsworth.
8. In the spring of 1857, the little Phillips Cemetery near Harrison was bought for \$15, and the deed signed June 10, 1865.





The Peck Lot.

SW - 71, 3

### Grinnell.

This lot is the resting place of Mr. William H. Grinnell and his wife, Myra C. Clark Grinnell. Mr. Grinnell was born at Sherman, Chautauqua Co., N.Y. Oct. 31, 1841. He died Febr. 5, 1925, in Beloit, aged 83 years. Mr. Grinnell was one of the founders of the Beloit Iron Works. In 1872, he married Miss Myra Clark of Beloit and they lived in a handsome residence on Bluff St. She died in 1903. In 1905, Mr. Grinnell married Mrs. Emma C. Ewing. Mrs. Myra C. Grinnell, 1843-- 1903. rests with her husband on this lot. The second Mrs. Grinnell, who came from the Peck family, was buried on the Peck lot. ( Shown at the right).

The second Mrs. Grinnell at the time of death bequeathed \$100,000 to the people of Beloit for a patriotic hall to be known as the William H. Grinnell Memorial Hall. This structure now stands on what was formerly the Lee property on Bluff Street. Mrs. Emma E. Grinnell died in 1936.



PROFESSOR CHAMBERLIN AS A COLLEGE STUDENT GRADUATED FROM BELOIT COLLEGE IN 1866 FROM 1873 TO 1882 HE WAS A PROFESSOR OF GEOLOGY THERE HE THEN JOINED THE U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WAS AT COLUMBIA WAS PRESIDENT OF THE UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN AND DEPT HEAD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

PROFESSOR CHAMBERLIN LIKE HIS GREAT CONTEMPORARY RALPH WALDO EMERSON WAS A LIFE LONG FIRST HAND OBSERVER OF NATURE; AND HIS GEOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE OF THIS REGION WHILE IT MAY BE SUPPLEMENTED HAS ALWAYS REMAINED AUTHORITATIVE

Thomas Chrowder Chamberlin  
1843- 1928.



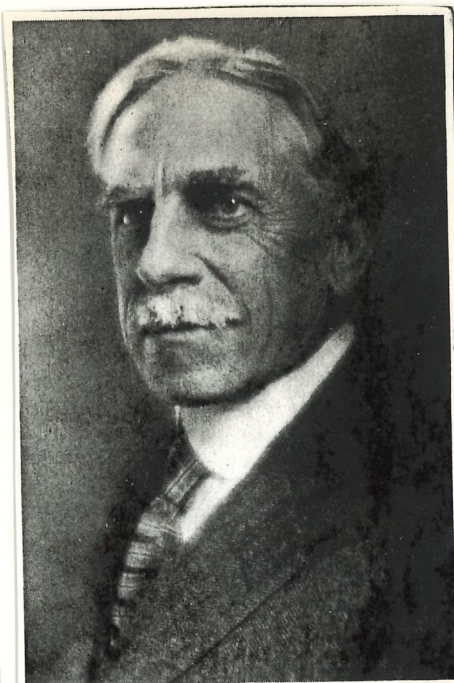
*for many years made Beloit famous in drama.*

WRIGHT.  
Theodore Lyman Wright.  
1858--1926.

Jean V. Ingham.  
Wife of Theodore Lyman Wright.  
1868- 1910

Professor Wright's stone bears a beautiful Greek fret with the Greek cross, containing the symbol for CHR, the first letters of the name of Christ, with Alpha and Omega.

Mrs. Wright's stone contains the same cross and symbol, with a beautiful fret using the grape and other Greek flora.



Teacher, traveler, poet, dramatist, Greek scholar, and art authority was Prof. Theodore Lyman Wright in whose honor the art hall on the college campus was named. He produced and directed Greek plays which for many years made Beloit famous in drama.

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## EMERSON.

Joseph Emerson.  
Born at Norfolk, Ct.  
May 28, 1821.  
Prof. of Greek in Beloit College  
1848--1900.  
Died Beloit, Wis.  
Aug. 4, 1900.

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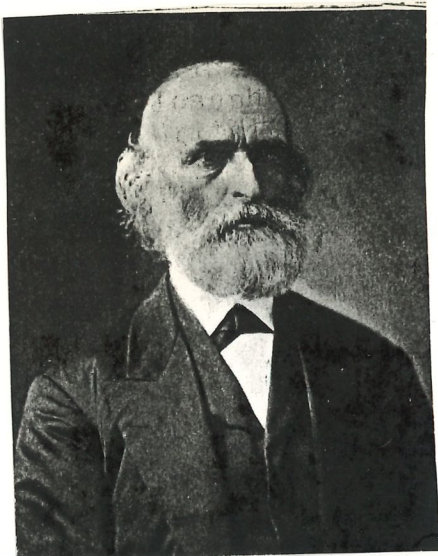
Mary Cordelia North.  
Wife of Joseph Emerson.  
Born New Britain, Ct.  
July 1, 1825.  
Died Beloit, Wis. Nov. 13, 1879.

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Frances Helen Brace.  
Wife of Joseph Emerson.  
Born Rochester, N.Y.  
Sept. 11, 1833.  
Died Aug. 13, 1920.

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Markers on this lot to:  
H.B. Emerson.  
Joseph Emerson.



PROFESSOR JOSEPH EMERSON

"Zeus" to many generations of early Beloit College students, Prof. Joseph Emerson was one of the great teachers and inspirations of the new college founded in the west. He was born in 1821, graduated in 1841 from Yale where he had as classmate Jackson J. Bushnell, and came to Beloit in 1848 to find Bushnell already here a year. He was a classicist and Greek scholar; but more important, teacher and inspirer. He died in 1900. Miss Clara Emerson is his daughter and C. A. Emerson his son.



Madame Helen Brace Emerson, wife of Prof. Joseph Emerson, was a leader in establishing an art hall on the campus and was curator of the first exhibits for about 30 years.





Aaron Lucius Chapin.

Hartford, Feb. 6, 1817.  
Beloit, July 22, 1892.

First President of Beloit College.

( Ten headstones accompany on  
this lot).



Born Feb. 1799. Died Apr. 1850.

Mr. Mack came to this country in 1822 and was the first white inhabitant of this county and of the Rock River Valley.

This tablet was erected by J.R. Jewett, Wm. Halley, and S.M. Church, 1880.

Mrs. H. Mack wife of Stephen Mack.

Died Sept. 8, 1847. aged ---

looks like 33)-----

Henry Clay son of S. & H. Mack.

Died Jan. 14, 1849.  
aged 9.

Note. This is about  
all that can now be read  
on these old stones.

County records in Illinois show that Mack procured a license to marry Hononegah, June 5, 1838, but the marriage did not take place until Sept. 14, 1840. The house still standing at Macktown was their home where his wife's people visited her sometimes. They were both much respected and tried to do good for Indians and whites alike, and it is said taught what Indian children would come to the house for school. After Hononegah died, Mack married Mrs. Isabella Daniels, Febr. 1848, but this was only a passing thing compared to the great romance of his first marriage and of short duration, as Mack died in 1850.



### Stephen Mack.

Stephen Mack, an outstanding pioneer figure of this region, together with his Indian wife and one child, is now buried in Phillips Cemetery, a small burying ground near Harrison, Winnebago Co., Illinois.

The above picture shows these old stones and their fading inscriptions. Following are some data about him: Mack was born in Poultney, Vt., Febr. 1799. He attended Dartmouth College, but left before graduation. Soon after the close of the War of 1812, he came west with his father's family to Detroit, where the father had some government work. After a time, he came farther west to Green Bay, Wisc. From there, young Mack decided to go looking for fur-trading opportunities on his own: alone, he set out on a pony. He reached the present site of Janesville and came down to Turtle

village on the present site of Beloit. There, asking the way to Bird's Grove in Illinois, he took the wrong trail and, instead, reached the Pottawatomies at Grand Detour, - a mistake which seems to have changed the whole course of his life. Mack set up a pony trade with Fort Dearborn, and, in incurring the wrath of some of the Indians, was saved by his Indian protectress, Hononegah, in his hideout on an island in Rock River. She was a daughter of a Pottawatomie chief. Mack married her in Indian rites which were renewed by white man's law, Sept. 14, 1840. In 1839, he built the house at Macktown on his farm. Their family consisted of 11 children: Rose, Mary, William, Louisa, Thomas H., Edward, Henry C., Matilda, and Caroline. Two died in infancy.

Mack planned to have a town rivalling or surpassing Milwaukee. Hononegah died in 1847, Mack, April 10, 1850. His will drawn up in meticulous white fashion, provided for her.

They were originally buried northwest of the present Macktown clubhouse, when it was Mack's farm. But when later used for pasture, in 1880, friends moved the graves to Phillips Cemetery. A boulder was placed in the place where they were first buried to mark the spot. (Sat. Nov. 6, 1848). The plan to place a granite monument on the present burial site in Phillips Cemetery has not yet been carried out. The stones placed there in 1880 by friends look as if they were at least being carefully watched and kept clean.



THE Winnebago county forest preserve commissioners agreed Tuesday that the new caretaker's home in Macktown forest preserve should be erected north and west of the old Stephen Mack residence.

The commissioners decided to have the house face the river rather than the golf course as the forestry and improvement committee had first recommended. The commissioners then authorized the forestry committee to ask for new bids on the house.

The present Mack home, built in 1839, has until recently served as the caretaker's residence. Clarence A. Pierce criticized the rest of the board of commissioners for wanting a new building and suggested that the old Mack home could be repaired and made livable for many years at a cost not to exceed \$5,000.

"That house isn't going to fall down for a long time," Pierce said. "The beams in it will last longer than the beams in most new houses being built today."

Pierce also commented, "We're building something (the new home) that will last a long time and the wishes of the entire board should be considered."

Protests from every part of the county, and especially from Rockton, followed the board's original proposal to tear down the Mack house and build a new caretaker's home on the old foundation. The board then agreed to pick a new site for the home and to keep intact the Mack house.

THURSDAY, MAY 18, 1950

### Have Plans for New Macktown Preserve Home

Plans for a new home for the caretaker at Macktown preserve near Rockton will be available to contractors at 2 p.m. Monday at the courthouse in Rockford.

The plans for a five-room ranch type home were prepared at the request of the Winnebago county board of forest preserve commissioners. Granville H. Coburn, county forester, announced that bids will be opened June 6, and may be submitted with recommendation to the board meeting June 12 or 13.

The proposed one-story house will be of frame construction with semi-log siding, and will be located adjacent to the present home which Stephen Mack built in 1839.

The county will preserve Mack's old home because of public sentiment. Lawrence McGonigal is the preserve caretaker.

*New Macktown Caretaker's  
Home Will Face the River*





### MERRILL.

The great grandfather of the subject of this memorandum was Pardon Haynes Merrill, also buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

SERENO TAYLOR MERRILL.

Sept. 24, 1816.  
Oct. 22, 1905.

JANE GREY BLODGETT.

His Wife.  
May 26, 1824.  
Nov. 17, 1906.

S.T. Merrill came to Beloit in 1846.

In connection with the founding of Beloit College, by the year 1847, there was a co-educational Beloit Seminary, of which in 1846, Rev. Merrill was Principal. Thus, he was a pioneer of College teachers, continuing in this work until May, 1848. And so he became teacher of the first Freshman class of Beloit College, 1848.

Mr. Merrill also acted as Superintendent of Beloit schools. He also served for thirty years as a Trustee of Beloit College.

The Beloit Savings Bank was organized on March 26, 1881, through the work of Sereno T. Merrill and John A. Holmes, the first elected President, the latter Secretary-treasurer. It was the first of its kind in Wisconsin, a mutual savings bank on an eastern and European plan. This John Anderson Holmes was a brother of Thomas Holmes, Turtleville, Shopiere, and County pioneer. Mr. Merrill also served in the state legislature and as a County supervisor. A bronze plaque in the Merrill School states that Mr. Merrill was the founder of the school savings plan in America, in connection with his work for the Savings Bank.

In heavy industry, Mr. Merrill became involved in paper making, by about 1856. By 1858, he had a paper making industry. By this year, also, Mr. Merrill was a partner in the Merrill & Houston Iron Works. He became its President and was head of the Rock River Paper Company many years. Mr. Merrill was one of the founders of the Eclipse Windmill Company, which was a fore-runner of the Fairbanks industry as it is today.

Mr. Merrill's great grandfather, mentioned at the beginning of this sketch, was the inventor of the "goose-neck" hoe. In Hinsdale, New Hampshire, his old shop may still be seen.

Professor Louis Taylor Merrill, his grandson, is a professor of History in Beloit College and a Beloit property owner.





The exterior of the first church constructed in 1853 by the parish of St. Thomas Catholic church provides a decided contrast to the present church, built in 1885, and redeccorated this year for the centennial of the oldest Catholic parish in the community. In the picture above, a Beloit Daily News photo by Behling, can be seen the new Appalachian white oak altar with its ornate canopy, and huge German carved crucifix. At the left is a copy of an old photograph made of the architect's drawing of the first stone church erected by the parish in 1853. The old church burned in 1884, and the present church was erected on the same site the following year.

## ***St. Thomas Observes Its Centennial Year***

(Editor's note: This is the first in a series of two articles on the history of St. Thomas Catholic parish and church. This article details the beginnings of Beloit's first Catholic parish and early history of the church. The second installment, which will appear on the editorial page of the Beloit Daily News on Monday will tell of the Rev. M. J. Ward's work in rebuilding the church, which burned in 1884, and later accomplishments of the church and its priests.)



By Minnie Mills Enking

WITH special prayers, a parish retreat, and frequent reception of holy communion, parishioners of the Catholic church of St. Thomas the Apostle are commemorating its centennial this year under the guidance of the Rev. T. A. O'Reilly, who has served Beloit's oldest Catholic parish for more than 20 years, and his assistants, the Rev. John W. Collins and the Rev. Roman A. Wiedholz. The commemoration was begun in May, 1952 and will end May 10, this year with special services.

The church which this year is celebrating 100 years of existence, is a far more elaborate building, with a vastly increased membership as compared to the Catholic community of five families which in 1841 petitioned the bishop of Milwaukee diocese for a priest to celebrate mass and to serve their spiritual needs. The few Catholics had banded together just five years after the settling of Beloit.

To solve the problem presented to him, the bishop established Beloit as a mission of the Janesville parish. A Delavan parish had also been established by that time. It is thought by some, that the Rev. Martin Kundig, who established in that same period so many churches and schools in the Milwaukee-Madison area, may have visited this small congregation.

#### Met in Private Home

As was the custom in mission parishes, the assigned priest would visit the congregation and celebrate mass at regular intervals, thought by many to be about once a month. The meetings were held at the home of Capt. and Mrs. T. A. Power.

Some stories, told from memory, indicate that masses also were offered by missionary priests at the home of William Butler, who kept a boarding house. The Butler House, as it was called, was located on the north side of Shirland ave., opposite the old Galena and Chicago Union depot, which still stands as part of the Hobbs Fuel Co.

It is recorded that Father Kernan administered the sacraments of the church to the parishioners in the Power home in 1846. The record is mentioned in the "Catholic History of Wisconsin", which was copyrighted in 1896 and published in 1895-1898 in Milwaukee. Others recall hearing that services were also held in this early period in Hanchett's hall.

As the congregation grew, the Power's home became inadequate, since many of the faithful had to kneel on the ground outside the

door in order to assist in the sacrifice of the mass. At this point, the congregation moved into Power's barn, located near the present Milwaukee railroad grain elevator on St. Paul ave., which was then called Race st.

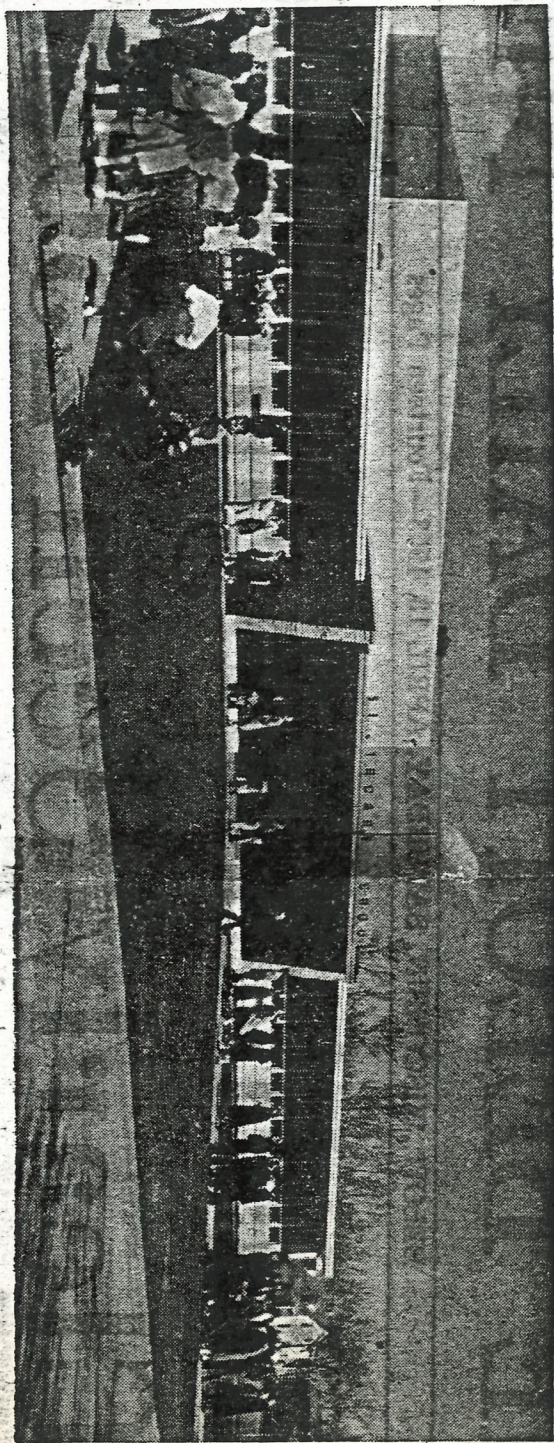
#### Remodeled For Church

Capt. Power deeded the building to the congregation and it was remodeled into a church, with a small altar and benches. Little is recorded of other events in the Catholic community until the early 1850s. It is believed that official records concerning the infant St. Thomas' parish, its marriages, baptisms and funerals, were kept at St. Patrick's parish in Janesville, whose priest was serving the Beloit mission. It is thought that the early priests took any such records with them when they left Janesville.

Capt. Power, who was at one time chairman of the village board, died in 1851. After his death, his

Turn to ST. THOMAS,  
Page 2

One of the community's finest and most modern school buildings is St. Thomas Catholic junior-senior high school on Henry ave. Built in 1949 by St. Thomas parish, the school now houses grades seven through 12, with the senior high school operated cooperatively by the St. Thomas and St. Jude's parishes. Future plans call for addition of more classrooms so that all grades can be included.  
(BDN photo by Bill Behling)





# St. Thomas

(Continued from page 1)

wife, Lucy, deeded two lots near her home for construction of a church. Some claim that the cornerstone was laid and the structure dedicated in 1851, and that the building was constructed under the direction of the Rev. John W. Norris.

However, the "Catholic History" points out that Father Norris didn't arrive in Beloit until August, 1853, and that he stayed here until February, 1859.

This statement is substantiated by the church baptismal register, which indicates that Father Norris signed his first record here Sept. 13, 1854, and the last record on Feb. 18, 1859. The verified information would seem to prove that the first stone church of St. Thomas' congregation was built in late '53, or early '54. The "Catholic History" concludes that the church was built in 1854, under Father Norris.

Dates on the cornerstone of the church state that it was erected in 1851, destroyed by fire in 1884 and rebuilt in 1885. Discrepancies may be explained by confusion over the organizing of the parish, and the building of the first stone church, which quite likely occurred in different years, and either or both events could have been commonly referred to as the "establishing" of the church.

## Pastor Appointed

The Rev. Michael McFaul was appointed pastor of the congregation in May, 1853, by Bishop Henni. He served the congregation for at least a year, according to the baptismal register which he signed for the last time in May, 1854. During that same period, Father Kundig served the parish for a few months in the summer of 1854. Later that year, Father Norris was assigned to the Beloit parish, where he stayed until 1859. Father Kundig again returned to the parish for the first two months in 1856.

Facts contained in records filed in the chancery office of the Milwaukee archdiocese and now in the Madison diocesan office, indicate that Lucy Power deeded the land on which the present church stands, to Bishop John Martin Henni. The exchange was recorded in the register's office of Rock county on March 21, 1854 at 8 a. m.

The registered information states that the "indenture was made and entered into March 6, 1854 between Lucy A. Power, and Bishop Henni of Milwaukee." "Lots 11 and 12 of block 71 on School st., present site of the church in East Grand ave., were 'deeded to the Catholic society of Beloit for a church,' with the reservation that Mrs. Power have the right to be buried along with the remains of her deceased husband in a family vault to be erected within the church edifice. Signed witnesses to the exchange were Mrs. Power, Justice of the Peace William Crozier and the Rev. Michael McFaul.

In 1858, the same set of records indicate Mrs. Power obtained ownership of the adjoining lot 13 in block 71, and a penciled note on the document seems to assign the lot to the bishop for the building of a house for the parish.

## Obtained Power Property

Original records dated Dec. 2, 1861, indicate that the preceding month, Mrs. Power actually deeded lot 13 for the building of a house and necessary buildings for sisters (spelled vesters) or brothers when "the church shall deem proper and able to do so; but said lot not to be held by said church or used for any other purpose than for the benefit of said church."

The same deed notes that Bishop Henni deeded the property to "Margaret Looly, called Sister Mary Agnes, Superioress of Sisters of Mercy, Beloit". Record of this action was made Dec. 16, 1861. All three lots in question apparently reverted back and forth between the church, the bishop and several private parties, before the matter was finally settled several years later.

Michael Fitzgerald, (grandfather of Dr. William Fitzgerald and sons, William, (father of the doctor) Edward and Thomas, who were masons, and Patrick and Bernard Cunningham, carpenters, are credited with doing much of the work on the stone building. A large basement, intended for a school, was included in the structure, the entrance of which had several steps leading up to an uncovered platform.

One writer states that the church was not dedicated until 1856. This same writer points out that Father Norris made his home, during the building of the rectory, with the Edward Murrays. Mrs. Power, an aunt of Mrs. Murray, also made her home with the Murrays following the death of Capt. Power.

The Rev. George B. Riordan succeeded Father Norris, in February, 1859, and was replaced that same fall by the Rev. T. A. Smith, who stayed in Beloit until 1862.

The Rev. M. Downey took over

the parish for about a month before the arrival of Father Smith. The Rev. H. J. Roche, credited with being a wonderful instructor of children, took over the parish during the absence of Father Smith, who obtained a leave of absence in 1860 to collect funds for the church.

Father Smith is recalled by many as being a strong supporter of Lincoln, and a patriotic gentleman. His first act, it is said, was to erect a flagpole and "float the Stars and Stripes" from the rectory.

Peter Smith, inspired by his brother, Father Smith, and with a background of some military training, recruited a company of young men when Lincoln called for volunteers. The recruiting was not difficult because the volunteers were all Irish or of Irish descent and willing to give their lives for the cause of freedom.

According to a history written by the late Miss Catherine Burns nearly 20 years ago, the young ladies of the parish also lent a hand in support of the Civil war volunteers, and in a short time collected funds to present the men with American and Irish flags. The Irish flag was of green silk, with a golden harp and shamrocks and the words "Erin Go Bragh" embroidered in gold letters.

"It was a proud day for St. Thomas parish," she wrote, "when her young men marched up School st. to attend mass and to receive holy communion before going to Madison to join the 17th Wisconsin volunteers. The green flag, which was carried by Thomas Fitzgerald, was brought back at the close of the war and was destroyed by fire when St. Thomas church burned in 1884."

The first Catholic school was established in the basement of the stone church during the Rev. Richard Harmon's time, 1862-1866. With willing helpers in the parish, he succeeded in clearing the ground on the west side of the church, and a building was moved from "the college bluff" to be used as a rectory. Father Harmon's previous home, not identified, was used as a convent.

## School Organized

While waiting for the teaching sisters to arrive, Father Harmon employed a Mrs. Carton and Mrs. Eliza Lyons (Mother of the late Miss Mary Lyons and Mrs. James Mullen) to organize the school. The bishop then sent three sisters from Milwaukee, according to Miss Burns' account of events. The enrollment was large and the children hard to manage, and the school was discontinued in a few years, much to the disappointment of the pastor, she wrote.

The sisters in question may have been the Mercy sisters referred to in the 1861 record of the deeding of property by Mrs. Power to the church, and thence to Sister Mary Agnes of the Mercy order.

The Rev. Richard Sullivan, known as "an apostle of temperance", and fore-runner of the greatest temperance leader Beloit has ever known, organized a temperance society in the parish, which he served from 1866 to 1883.

Also eager for a school, Father Sullivan soon sent a request for teachers to Mother M. Agnes Hazotte, the first superior general of the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Agnes, the same order which has teachers in the Brother Dutton and new St. Thomas' Catholic schools here.

The order accepted the mission, and appointed four sisters to take charge of the school connected with the parish in 1873, according to records at the mother house in Fond du Lac. The young sisters sent here were Sister M. Bonaventure Shinnors, superior, Sister M. Bernard Murphy, Sister M. Euphemia Fenelon, and Sister M. Cornelia Fitzgibbons. The latter three taught about three grades each in the school, which had an enrollment of about 100 pupils. They lived in a cozy frame building near the church.

## Parish Mostly Irish

Convent records state that "the parishioners were chiefly pioneers who had emigrated from Ireland. They were both God-fearing and God-loving, and had the greatest respect for priests and sisters. The children were docile, humorous and promising."

Sister M. Bonaventure remained in Beloit for two years, and was succeeded by Sister M. Petra Murphy. Convent records do not indicate why or when the mission was given up, but some of the senior sisters think it was in 1876.

Sisters of Mercy took over the school for about two years after the withdrawal of the Agnesians, however there seemed to be some dissatisfaction in the congregation, and the school was closed permanently in about 1878.

Father Sullivan continued to labor among his people until 1883, when he was replaced by Father Ward. On his deathbed a year later, Father Sullivan asked that he be buried in Calvary cemetery, where the children he baptized and loved could visit his grave and pray for him. The Ancient Order of Hiberians erected a monument